



November 29, 2006

Three are sentenced to prison for extortion in an assault on a West Warwick businessman

A federal judge in Providence has sentenced three Massachusetts men to prison for extortion in an assault on a West Warwick businessman over a purported gambling debt.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the sentences, which Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ernest C. Torres imposed in U.S. District Court, Providence.

Judge Torres yesterday sentenced **Thinh Cao**, of Quincy, to 150 months in prison. On November 17, Judge Torres sentenced **Van Anh**, also of Quincy, to 52 months, and **Khong Nguyen**, of Watertown, to 36 months. Still awaiting sentencing for his role in the extortion is **Quoc Nguyen**, also of Watertown.

Cao was sentenced as a career offender. He has prior convictions in Massachusetts and New Jersey for armed robbery and drug trafficking.

Federal juries in May and June convicted the four men in the extortion. Quoc Nguyen was tried separately from the other three defendants.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Sandra R. Beckner, and James H. Leavey, and First Assistant U.S. Attorney Kenneth P. Madden prosecuted the cases for the government. During the two trials, they presented evidence that, in early 2005, a West Warwick businessman lost \$12,000 betting on basketball games – \$6,800 for himself and \$5,200 that he said was on behalf of a friend.

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A few weeks after the bets were placed, Anh, Khong Nguyen, and a third individual visited the businessman at his shop and demanded that he pay the \$12,000. The gambler subsequently paid Anh \$6,800, the bets that he claimed were his.

On July 25, 2005, the Nguyens, who are brothers, and Cao went to the man's shop, demanded that he pay the remaining \$5,200 of the debt, and put him in touch with Anh by cell phone. After the victim told Anh that he wouldn't pay, Khong and Quoc Nguyen beat him; Cao directed the assault. The victim suffered minor injuries and, with the help of an associate, managed to flee. After an associate of the victim contacted West Warwick Police, Cao and the Nguyens fled in their motor vehicle. Massachusetts State Police stopped the vehicle carrying the three men, and they returned to Rhode Island.

The FBI joined the investigation and, in December 2005, a federal grand jury returned a two-count indictment charging the four men with conspiring to use extortionate means to collect a debt and with using extortionate means to collect a debt.

Anh, Khong Nguyen, and Cao were found guilty of both charges. Quoc Nguyen was found guilty of extortion but not guilty of conspiracy.

The FBI, West Warwick Police, and the Massachusetts State Police investigated the case.

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